

Week Ending Friday, November 26, 1999

**Statement on the Texas A&M
University Bonfire Tower Tragedy**
November 19, 1999

Today I spoke with Dr. Ray Bowen, president of Texas A&M University, to extend my deepest sympathies on the tragedy that occurred at the campus. This is a heartbreaking loss. America stands with the College Station community as it joins together during this difficult time. Hillary and I offer our thoughts and prayers to the families and friends of those who were injured or killed in this devastating incident.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address
November 20, 1999

Good morning. I'm speaking to you from Istanbul, Turkey, where we just wrapped up a successful summit meeting of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe, one that focused on the global challenges of the new century. At the same time, our administration has also wrapped up our work with Congress on the first budget of the new century.

Today I want to talk to you about what we achieved and highlight a little-known accomplishment that will make a big difference to people with disabilities who want to be part of our Nation's growing economy.

This week's budget agreement is truly a victory for the American people, a victory for children because it invests in world-class education that keeps us on the path to hiring 100,000 quality teachers to reduce class size. It doubles funds for after-school and summer school programs, and it provides help for communities to turn around failing schools or shut them down. It's a victory for families and neighborhoods, because it commits the

resources necessary to begin hiring another 50,000 community police officers to keep our crime rate, already at a 25-year low, coming down. It's a victory for future generations, because it protects the environment and preserves more natural areas, and it's a victory for American leadership in the world, because finally, it pays our U.N. dues and maintains our commitments around the globe to peace in the Middle East, to reducing the nuclear threat and chemical weapons threats, to helping relieve the debt of the world's poorest nations.

In short, we have delivered a 21st century budget that prepares for the future and lives up to our values. It also continues to pay down our national debt, because we walked away from that big \$792 billion tax cut that the Congress passed and I vetoed. So we got the best of all worlds.

Perhaps nothing better symbolizes just what we were fighting for than the historic progress made in the budget to open new doors of opportunity for Americans with disabilities.

Now, we're enjoying one of the strongest economies in generations. Yet even today 75 percent of Americans with severe disabilities who are ready, willing, and able to work aren't working. One of the biggest reasons is they fear they'll lose their health insurance when they get a job. And there's a good reason for this fear.

Under current law, many people with disabilities are eligible for Medicaid or Medicare coverage. But they can't go to work and keep that coverage. Yet when they do go to work, they can't get private insurance because of their disability. So there is a tremendous disincentive to work. Let me just give you one example.

I met a man in New Hampshire not long ago who is paralyzed as a result of an accident. He wanted to take a job that paid \$28,000 a year, but he would have lost his Medicaid health coverage, which would have